

**From:** [Brent Smith](#)  
**To:** [Alisha Jackson](#); [Kinghorn, Austin](#)  
**Subject:** FYI  
**Date:** Friday, November 12, 2021 11:25:46 AM  
**Attachments:** [drone video.MOV](#)

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I just emailed this to the Governor's chief policy advisor. Thought I would keep yall in the loop.

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Mr. Munisteri,

I have been contacted by several law enforcement officers in the county about an issue that I think the Governor's office could easily help out with.

Earlier this week I accompanied DPS officers and Kinney County deputies on their night operations. It was very educational on what specific resources are lacking in OLS. During their night patrol, several drawbridge cameras detected 3 groups of illegal aliens, totaling approximately 60-70 individuals traveling through the county. These 3 groups were scattered throughout the county traveling through several different ranches. Due to the terrain and distance separating each group, law enforcement would have to apprehend one group at time. In order for DPS to apprehend each group, their exact location must first be determined by the use of air support with thermal technology. This thermal technology and resource is vital for any type of night operations like this to occur. However, when DPS requested helicopter air support, over two hours elapsed until it arrived. Unfortunately, by this time, only one of the groups was able to be located and apprehended.

Drone technology has made significant improvements in the recent years that rivals that of a helicopter. The thermal cameras on drones allows for the same role of a helicopter to be fulfilled at a fraction of the cost and time for deployment. Deployment of a drone takes seconds instead of hours waiting on a helicopter to arrive. I have attached a video recently taken from a drone using a thermal camera. As you can see, evading such technology at night is nearly impossible.

If DPS would have had a thermal drone that night, I am certain all 3 groups would have been apprehended without a problem. Moreover, using a thermal drone would allow law enforcement officers on the ground to identify exactly how many individuals they are attempting to apprehend and whether they need to call for backup prior to confronting the group. Many times, a law enforcement officer will attempt to detain what they believe is a group of 3 individuals, but in reality is 30.

DPS was not able to deploy a thermal drone that night due to the unavailability of a drone pilot. I personally have a drone that we use on the ranch to check fences etc. The skills required to fly a drone are very similar to playing any modern video game and do not require much training. The officer I accompanied that night informed me that law enforcement agencies must send their pilots to a training school and obtain multiple training certificates prior to them becoming a drone pilot. He also informed me that training schools are only offered a few times during the year.

After looking into the matter myself and reviewing the multiple certifications that are required for a law enforcement agency to utilize a drone, it is clear that such certifications were created for the safe use of drones in heavily populated metropolitan areas with various structures and

obstacles. In Kinney County, 95% of the land is rural agricultural property with power lines being the only obstacle to consider while flying a drone. The safety concerns that such training requirements were created for simply do not exist in Kinney County.

On June 25, 2021, Governor Greg Abbott issued an amended Proclamation of Disaster directing that state agencies work and cooperate with Texas counties and law enforcement to provide appropriate guidance and/or any necessary suspensions of rules of a state agency if strict compliance with the provisions, orders, or rules would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay necessary action in coping with a disaster.

I believe the Governor's office could drastically improve the apprehension rate and safety of law enforcement officers on the ground by suspending or streamlining some of the training requirements that drone pilots must satisfy during OLS. Any such suspensions granted by the Governor could be limited to only those counties under a declared disaster and further limited to airspace outside of the city limits, or 2 miles from any military facility. I am sure there would need to be a few more limitations on any suspension, but those two are what comes to mind as I draft this.

I ask that you please forward this request to the appropriate person for their consideration.

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